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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical and psychological implications of group instruction in the foreign language classroom are explored in this article. Discussion of Lorraine E. Heard's study, "Foreign Language and the Group Context: Expanded Student Roles," contrasts the classical objectives of language instruction ("purposive," "cognitive," and "concerned with input and output") with a broader series of objectives more directly concerned with the affective domain of student growth. Specific examples illustrating methods of expanding student roles in groups are provided in four types of activities: (1) mastery building, (2) oral compositions, (3) tutorial remediation, and (4) cross-level sharing. A second article by Anthony Papalia and Joseph Zampogna, "An Experiment in Individualized Instruction through Small Group Interaction," is also discussed. Several approaches are examined, including: (1) the wheel, (2) pairing, (3) inner-outer circle, and (4) triads, quartets, and quintets. (RL)

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THE FOREIGN-LANGUAGE STUDENT AS A SOCIAL CREATURE: THE USE OF GROUPS IN THE FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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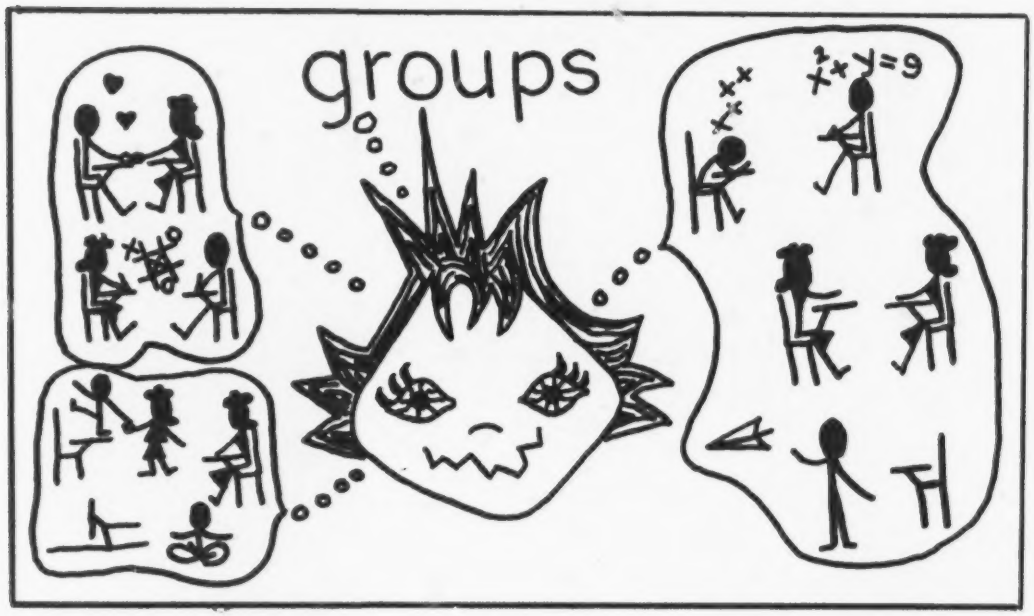
"Groups" is a word that can bring a clutch of icy terror to the heart of many a teacher if those groups are to be made of a class:

Transparency #1: GROUPS



In teacherese, "groups" is the antonym of "discipline," the antithesis of "teaching." The synonyms for "groups" are "noise" and "disorder." "Discipline," "teaching," and "order" require organization--the "standard" order, perhaps, of six rows of six seats, seven rows of five seats, or whatever mathematics are employed to produce a square or rectangle of the student desks.

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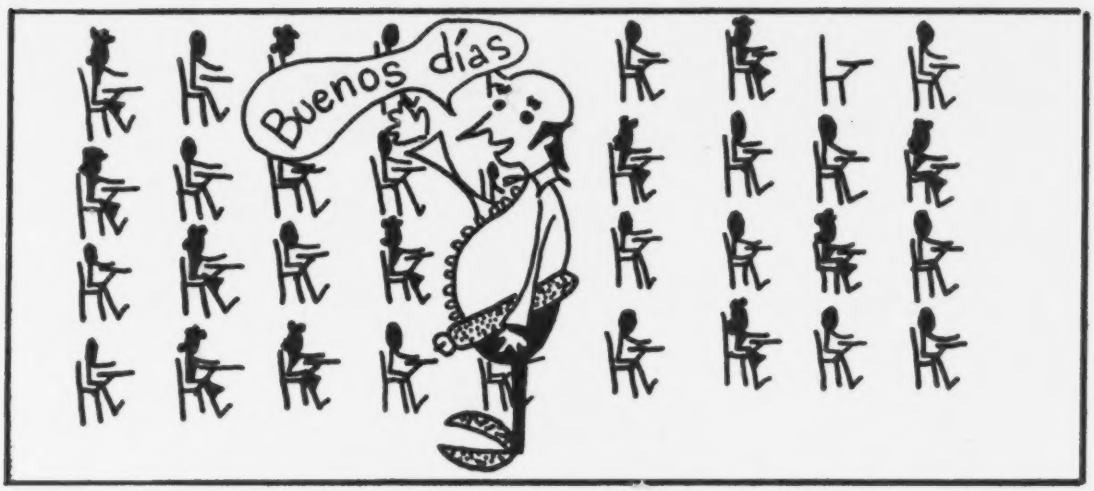
Transparency #2: BUENOS DÍAS



The rectangle or the square in the classroom clearly defines the authority figure--for the students, for our colleagues, and for our administrators. What teacher in his right mind would disturb such harmony and symmetry for noise, disarrayed desks, and "goofing off?" Why not just "loosen up" the seating arrangements?

Even when the arrangements of the classroom furniture are "loosened" into the semi-circle or such variations, however, the authority figure of the teacher looms large and unthreatened.

The student is, for all practical purposes, encased in a cabinet which the teacher opens and closes, for as Marvin R. Weisbord points out:

> ...Many people believe that a rigid emphasis on order, quiet, and routine is essential to the operation of schools, given the diversity of students, the many conflicts existing just below the surface, and the fear that students may "get out of control."[1]

In the majority of classrooms, the student works either within the total group under teacher direction or wholly alone under teacher supervision.

Lorraine E. Heard refers to this student role as that of "producer-consumer." In her March 1972 Foreign Language Annals, she says:

> An observational analysis of the activities in most foreign language classrooms would reveal

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[1]Marvin R. Weisbord. "What Do We Want From Our Schools?" In The School and the Democratic Environment. The Danforth Foundation and the Ford Foundation. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970): 13.

> that producer-consumer exchanges predominate. Assumption of this role...shifts from teacher to student to teacher in a predictable pattern. The teacher structures and dispenses information, and then markets it for student consumption. At some point in the instructional time line, the student is asked to reproduce what he has consumed. The pattern practice as a pedagogical device is a case in point....[2]

Teachers who fear the use of small groups are afraid that the behavior of students in these groups will not be what Heard identifies for the producer-consumer--"purposive," "generally cognitive," and "with desirable input and output."

How "purposive" is student behavior in the total class? Is it really all that "cognitive?"

Transparency #3: У кого есть книга?

Isn't "tuning out" simply less overt and less apparent in the total class than in the small group? Perhaps what is at fault in our approach to the use of small groups is that we have tended, far too much, to concentrate on what we already do in class in determining what these groups should accomplish. We have defined small-group activities in terms of what we already do--and the teacher standing and hovering over the group was doing mental evaluations at all times, expecting the student who is permitted two minutes of display time in the total class to display himself for ten minutes in the small group. And in this framework, we have lamented the fact that students develop no group rapport, no group feeling, no "group life."

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[2]Lorraine E. Heard. "Foreign Languages and the Group Context: Expanding Student Roles." Foreign Language Annals, Volume Five, Number Three (March 1972): 315.

What kind of group feeling or "group life" can evolve from activities like these--if they are all there is?

Transparency #4: POSSIBLE SMALL-GROUP ACTIVITES
(Least Sophisticated)

1. Working together on special short assignments such as worksheets and Unipacs.
2. Practicing and presenting dialogues.
3. Performing pattern drills.
4. Practicing dictations.
5. Reading aloud and clarifying meaning.
6. Asking and answering questions on dialogues and narrative content.
7. Creating and performing simple recombinations of known dialogue material.
8. Viewing visuals and listening to recorded material.
9. Playing simple games.
10. Recording simple dialogues.
11. Working on remedial exercises.
12. Making simple reports.
13. Putting up bulletin boards.
14. Preparing and presenting pantomimes.
15. Competing with other groups in solving crossword puzzles and riddles.
16. Competing in preparing and presenting a song.[3]

The activities improve somewhat in the designation of the "most sophisticated" activities, although only numbers 3 and 6 are beyond the pale of the total classroom activities.

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[3]Jermaine D. Arendt. "The Function and Techniques of Group Work in an Individualized Program." Conference on Individualizing Foreign Language Instruction. Howard Altman and Robert Politzer, editors, Stanford University. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education (July 1971): 109-110.

Transparency #5: POSSIBLE SMALL-GROUP ACTIVITIES
(Most Sophisticated)

1. Working in a group in which members decide upon special assignments for each student.
2. Performing individual research and combining information for a cumulative activity.
3. Creating original television, film and audio recordings.
4. Presenting original skits and cultural reports.
5. Demonstrating how to do something.
6. Preparing talent shows.[4]

All of these activities are possibilities for the small group, certainly, but what could happen if we took our eyes off the narrow view of the discipline and put them on the broader aspects of the student's development in and through small-group work?

In her excellent article in the March 1972 Foreign Language Annals, Lorraine E. Heard begins her discussion of "Foreign Language and the Group Context: Expanding Student Roles" with the basic assumptions:

> ...that the classroom is a culture in itself; that each student by his presence and participation (or lack of it) in classroom life, contributes to the quality of that culture. Generated from these assumptions is that the proposition that the more opportunity the student has to assume the various roles he will take up in life outside the school--producer-consumer, citizen, and friend--the more meaningful foreign language will be, not solely as a human artifact or even as a means of communication, but as a rich integrative tool to unite the learner to the affective life and expectations of society. The classroom could then be described as a learning society in the broadest and most humane sense....[5]

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[4]Ibid., p. 110.

[5]Heard, op. cit., p. 314.

Heard includes the following in her definition of the student-citizen's role:

1. assumption of responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of a learning climate;

2. exchange of resources;

3. respect for individuals as they contribute to the general welfare of the social system.

Her student-friend is typified by:

1. affective exchanges with class members, sharing values, attitudes, feelings, thoughts;

2. establishment of authentic interpersonal relationships.

She points up the fact that the citizen or friend dimensions of the learning process are all too often missing in the framework of formal classwork, that where friends to "celebrate their friendship," they are considered disruptive, for their activities usually involve talking in English, joking, or some "goofing off" or fooling around. Students do interact with each other in formal class work but usually only by command of the teacher.

Transparency #6: HEARD'S EXPANDING STUDENT ROLES

I. Mastery Building*

II. Oral Compositions

III. Tutorial Remediation

IV. Cross-Level Sharing

*Not Heard's term.

Heard suggests four ways of expanding student roles in the small-group context. I have taken the liberty of labeling her first suggestion as "Mastery Building," for she gives it no designation. Saying that "mastery is mastery regardless of who is master," she suggests that students

who have mastered a concept be chosen to lead small groups of four or five once the leaders have been given the expectations for the task outcome. She suggests this device as a means of combating "uneveness in student abilities" in "transposing a dialogue into the narrative form" in "reworking the concept of indirect discourse." She is realistic about the problems in such an endeavor.

> ...This is a rather simplistic and hardly original illustration which may give the illusion of equating knowing something with knowing how to teach it. But students are remarkably adept at synthesizing, creating, and developing their own unique and often very effective teaching styles. What is as significant as the clarification of matters of content which may result from such group activity is the coalition of students working together, participating in creative learning. The group setting is crucial to the maintenance of an atmosphere of mutual help and reciprocity--the components of citizenship. Students come to depend on and value the contributions of their peers, to see each other as possible resources, directly affecting each other's progress in the language.[6]

Judith Morrow of Bloomington High School in Indiana, who has done some work with this type of small group, has commented repeatedly on how students seem to be able to razor through unnecessary verbiage to make the point or points that bring understanding in their peers. One of her colleagues commented that a leader took as much pride in one of his group member's performance as in his own.

Heard's "Oral Compositions" call for the presentation of a picture within the range of the student's lexical and semantic acquisition and calling for the group to describe what is happening, pooling their respective views to compose a coherent, descriptive passage from the mass of phrases and ideas they generate. Pointing out that not every exercise need be graded every time, Heard suggests that the expected quality of the work and the evaluative criteria should be communicated before the groups begin. She suggests that the teacher should circulate among the groups to encourage the use of relational words and clause patterns so that the resultant compositions do not turn out to be merely enumerations of objects. She stresses the fact that the teacher's interventions should be of a helping rather than an evaluative nature. The teacher has to provide support and encouragement in such grouping efforts. One invaluable piece of advice from Heard is:

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[6]Heard, op. cit., p. 316.

> ...Sitting down with the students during the brief visitations rather than hovering over their shoulders helps communicate the attitude of concern and willingness to help....[7]

We sometimes destroy our own efforts by being too much the conscious and conscientious teacher, in other words, by failing to let go the reins. Heard suggests that the compositions can be presented to the class, each group selecting its representative to speak. For the diehard sceptic, Heard offers examples in her article to show that each group's efforts will not be just like another.

In conjunction with Heard's oral composition suggestions, I have a couple of pet projects of my own (and they are the reason I am sure that no two compositions will turn out the same). The first of these is a murder mystery idea suggested in our office's newsletter, The Dialog, and developed in German by Terry Gamba of Purdue. This approach calls for a visual of the murder scene (on the overhead or dittoed for the groups), the exposition of the situation in the target language, and role-playing.

Let me give you a fast rundown of the situation in English:

> Four guests are spending the weekend on the estate of a Mr. Leich. During the course of the evening Mr. Leich went into his study, asking that he not be disturbed because he had something very important to do. The next morning Leich is found dead on the Study floor with a knife in his back. Mr. Kühn examined the room and found several clues there. He knew that Mr. Leich had been a distinguished soldier who had suddenly become very rich before he began his investigation. In the study he found a military decoration from an Indian regiment on the floor not too far from the body. He also noted that Mr. Leich's checkbook was out on his desk, near two empty cups which indicated a visit of some duration. A valuable Indian statue was left on the safe which was open and had been emptied. The final clue was a handkerchief with lipstick on it which was on the couch in the study. Mr Kühn speaks with each of the other guests, then he calls the police and tells them who the murderer was, what the motive was, and how Mr. Leich was murdered. Who finally confesses?

The roles can be adjusted to fit the class population, but here are some suggestions:

> Isadora Tutti-Frutti: a Spanish ballet dancer. She has a shady past.

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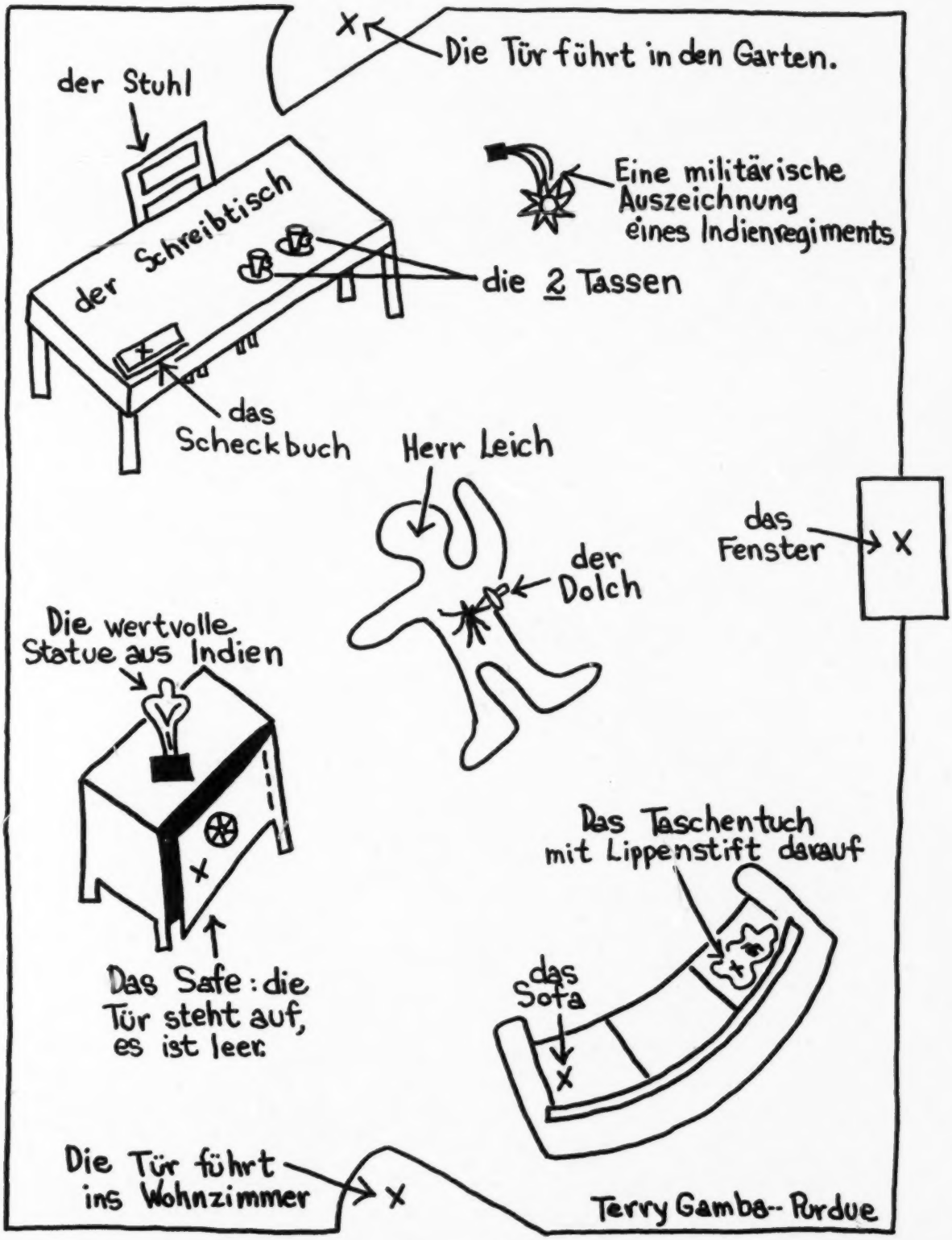
[7]Heard, op. cit., p. 317.

Transparency #7: THE MURDER MYSTERY



Siegfried Kühn: a private detective and an old friend of the deceased. Leich had told him that he had something important to discuss with him.

Heinrich Flatter: a young playboy from a good family. He has had financial reverses.

The Bulter (or Maid, if there are more girls in class)

Mr. (or Mrs.) Kleinlich: an old, pedantic friend of Leich's who had been in India when he was.

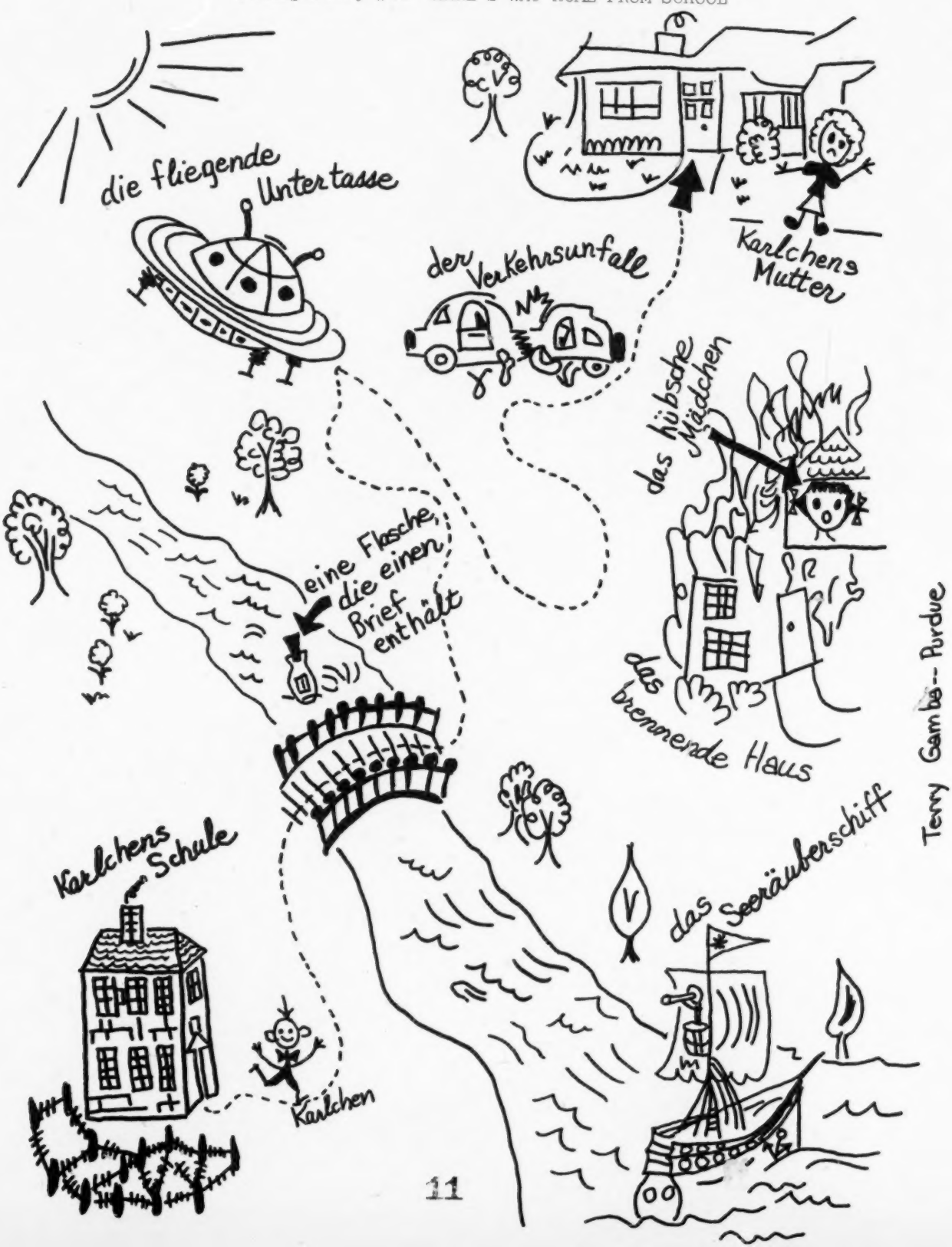
Experience has shown that five groups can produce five murderers--and each for good reasons. The results can be performed, mimeographed, videotaped, or recorded.

The second of Terry Gamba's lessons also lends itself to group composition. In this instance the group is called upon to pool its imaginative resources to build a story, selecting one performer to tell it (or two, if they want "Mama" represented). There is once more a visual for the overhead or the ditto machine and a situation (to be presented in the target language, of course).

The situation:

> Little Karl is a good boy, but as it is with most good boys, he has a good and a bad side. The good side of Karl is that he goes to school faithfully every day, that he does his homework, and that he helps his mother and follows her instructions. These things keep Karl busy from morning to night.
>
> On the bad side, there is just one thing. Karl is a dreamer. However, he has so much to do that he doesn't have much time for dreaming. For this reason the trip home from school is Karl's favorite time of the day. During this time he is his own man and he can dream what and as he wishes. If little Karl comes home an hour late, his mother is naturally very angry, but if he comes home three hours late, she is so glad that he is home safe again that she usually forgets to be mad at him. It is part of Karl's bad side that he makes the most of this knowledge.
>
> It is now your task to describe the bad side of little Karl more fully, for the bad side is always more interesting than the good one. You have a map on which you can see Karl's homeward path. He has several opportunities for this or that little adventure. Describe Karl's adventure as he might tell it to his mother upon arriving home.

Transparency #8: KARL'S WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL



The possibilities include· a flying saucer, an auto accident, a pretty girl in a burning house, a message in a bottle in the stream, and a pirate ship. The map also serves to give students whatever vocabulary "assists" they may need.

These activities, which do provide choices and options for a range of competencies and imaginations, are not merely regurgitation drills in which the student answers already answered questions. They may prove to help teachers in responding to this type of student complaint:

> A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY: I sometimes have the feeling that everything we do has been done before--it's all spelled out, printed, carried through the years, along with the answer book.
>
> A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL: It seems as if there's nothing for us to do but say, Oh hell, all right. The curriculum planners, the publishers, the packagers, the administrators, and the teachers have the courses all mapped out. Our own teacher is so gung ho that he has a whole lot more of his own that we get. You get the feeling that there's nothing left that can be ours, nothing for us to do but chew it all and swallow it, and then say, "I did it. What now?"[8]

No communication skills and no language proficiency is developed when all the student can do is "chew it all and swallow it."

Heard's third suggestion is for remediation through the establishment of tutorial relationships. The one-to-one relationship possibilities and the student's ability to reach his peers, of course, append in this situation. Heard's final suggestion, and her best, it seems to me, is for "Cross-Level" sharing in which advanced students work with lower levels. Although she suggests the presentation of oral material or question-answer drills for this sharing, I see possibilities for interviews, cultural discussions, and the use of these people in Ciotti's group structuring which we shall be discussing shortly. Heard says of <u>this</u> context:

> Recognition of the linguistic talents and aptitudes of advanced foreign language students through systematic social experiences such as these has some obvious advantages: (1) It restores what should be a natural coalition among groups striving for similar goals though at different levels of approach. (2) It provides students inured to the "challenge" of foreign language with renewed motivation for learning. (3) As a function of that motivation it can furnish fresh

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[8]David Mallery. "Voices Inside the Beleaguered School." In <u>The School and the Democratic Environment</u>. The Danforth Foundation and the Ford Foundation. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970): 96.

> insights into the learning process and the state of the learner's knowledge. (4) It can confirm that foreign language is alive and living, useful and usable in communicating with others. Similar benefits accrue to the beginning student. In addition, the advanced students' teaching model can sharpen motivational stimulus as the beginning student sees that proficiency in a foreign language can be attained by other students.[9]

And, although it should not have to be said, Heard knows, as we know, that it must, and so she concludes:

> ....Standards for evaluation of each activity in terms of attainment of a linguistic objective should be consensually decided (between teacher and groups, among members of groups, between tutor and tutee)....[10]

But, if the citizen and friend approach in grouping for affective benefits does not reach you, let's consider another approach to grouping--this one from Clarence, New York.

The experiment in Clarence, New York, was set up to determine the influence of the classroom social climate upon achievement in the basic skills of French and to define ways in which the teacher can promote group work. Four basic grouping devices are described by Anthony Papalia and Joseph Zampogna in their March 1972 Foreign Language Annals article.

Transparency #9: SMALL GROUP INTERACTION

I. The Wheel

II. Pairing

III. Inner-Outer Circle

IV. Triads, Quartets, Quintets

The Wheel was used at the very beginning to stimulate student-student and student-teacher interaction. The secondary aims of the Wheel were to promote conversation in French, to learn something about each other, and to enhance a positive social climate in the peer group. Three sheets of paper, a "what wheel," a "why wheel," and a "how wheel" were given to students working in pairs. Each of the students began with the "what wheel," filling in as many spokes as needed to clarify the first impressions he had of his partner. Then the pair exchanged wheels long enough for each of the students to underline the comment about

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[9]Heard, op. cit., p. 319.

[10]Heard, op. cit., p. 319.

himself which most intrigued him, whether it was a positive or a negative characteristic. Wheels were then returned to the student who made a "why wheel," explaining his reasons for having had that impression. Papers, or "wheels" were exchanged once more, and the students then made "how wheels" for their partners, setting forth the range of actions which increased or decreased the trait under consideration. At the end of the written exercises, the pairs of students discussed their work in French. Papalia and Zampogna say that in evaluating this exercise the students commented that it increased their practical vocabulary, made them explore their differences and converse about them, and permitted them to work for better understanding of their fellow students.

Let's discuss "Pairing" in the words of the authors, Papalia and Zampogna:

> Pairing was used to develop listening and facility in changing direct discourse into indirect discourse. Randomly paired students were to explain to each other what the teacher had just presented, or what task they were to perform by paraphrasing each other's statements before making new ones.

Paired learning experiences are valuable for the contributions they can make to mastery of the discipline and for the contributions they can make to learning ourselves through others.

If I may desert Papalia and Zampogna for a moment, I would like to show you some exercises which might be fun for a pair of students. Suppose that you were to introduce some of the new poetry very briefly by discussing the fact that it is something to be seen and used and also something to be thought of, that it deals in brevity and compression to provide easy-to-remember images in models of verbal play in action. Then, with no further ado, give the students, in pairs, the poems to work with, specifying that they may show their understanding of the poems in one of three ways:

1. A written paragraph analyzing the poems;

2. English translations of the poems (in appropriate format, of course);

3. Writing other German poems evidencing the same characteristics.

The poems I am using are from Carl Ziegler's unpublished experimental J104 Extended Elementary German materials which were designed for use with marginal or disadvantaged learners.

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[11] Anthony Papalia and Joseph Zampogna "An Experiment in Individualized Instruction through Small Group Interaction. Foreign Language Annals, Volume Five, Number Three (March 1972): 304.

Transparency #10: ERNST JANDL: Sprechblasen

st
und
en
und
st
und
en
und
st
und
en
und
st
und
en

In the stunden poem, of course, the time concept--"hours, hours, hours, hours, is obvious to most students, as is the wohin bist du (where are you?).

Transparency #11: EUGEN GOMRINGER: Worte sind Schatten

schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen

silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio

das schwarze geheimnis
ist hier
hier ist
das schwarze geheimnis

le mistère noir
est ici
ici est
le mistère noir

the black mystery
is here
here is
the black mystery

Most students find the counting poem great fun and love playing with "off-shoots." The schweigen (silence) poem, too, comes through to students readily as does "the black mystery." Interestingly enough, the students with what we would identify as the lowest proficiency often have the greatest insight into this type of poetry, even as to its deeper meanings.

But back to Papalia and Zampogna.

We'll use their own words in describing their "Inner-outer Circle" groupings.

> Inner-outer Circle was used to develop conversational skills, observations, and listening. Five students were in the inner circle conversing on a specific assigned topic, such as a French film, an article or an advertisement in the French magazine, or selected readings. The other five students in the outer circle were to observe one student each of the inner circle and to write down errors of pronunciation and structure which they recognized. At the end of the conversation, the students in the inner cricle paired themselves with those observing them and discussed the possible errors they had made during the conversation practice....[12]

The teacher's role in the Inner-outer Circle, as explained by the authors, consisted of the following: (1) providing question sheets related to the topics; (2) serving as a resource person; (3) giving feedback; and (4) prescribing and developing remedial work. Each group was task-oriented in an effort to avoid inefficiency and feelings of frustration. The students who served as observers provided feedback for self-evaluation and direction. All students also evaluated every unit--but we shall come back to that facet.

The Triad, Quartet, and Quintet groups were used for conversational purposes, formed either at random or by teacher selection as to interests, remediation, or enrichment. Leaders were sometimes appointed, sometimes selected within the groups. Students discussed predetermined topics, the leader utilizing a list of questions prepared by the teacher to keep the conversation moving. (Much this same kind of approach is suggested by Ciotti, especially in the early stages of grouping). During these groupings, the teacher: encouraged students; organized and directed activities; observed and diagnosed problems; prescribed learning materials; and guided and helped individual students.

The students provided unit-by-unit feedback to the teacher through an on-going evaluation process. This process also forced the student to do some internal evaluation, too, of course.

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[12]Papalia and Zampogna, op. cit., p. 304.

Transparency #12: UNIT EVALUATION SHEET

Your frank and thoughtful reactions to the unit we have just completed should be helpful in evaluating what we have done and in planning for the future.

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER OR CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE STATEMENT. 1 lowest, 7 highest.

1. MY GENERAL REACTION TO THIS UNIT: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. MY INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT IS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. MY FEELING ABOUT THIS CLASS AS A NICE PLACE TO COME TO:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. THE AMOUNT OF MY PERSONAL LEARNING THIS UNIT:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. TEACHER DIRECTION WAS:
   TOO MUCH TOO LITTLE JUST RIGHT

6. AS A RESULT OF THIS UNIT MY ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE HAS CHANGED:
   NOT AT ALL SOME GREATLY

7. AS A RESULT OF THIS UNIT MY ABILITY TO HELP IN PLANNING THE COURSE HAS CHANGED:
   NOT AT ALL SOME GREATLY

8. HIGH SPOTS OF THE UNIT WERE:

9. LOW SPOTS OF THE UNIT WERE:

Look closely at numbers 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Wouldn't a lot of students love to have this type of input capability?

I will leave you to read the findings of the experiment Papalia and Zampogna conducted, but it does appear that the students in the experimental group were challenged, cared about each other, worked according to their ability, and were more satisfied with the work in the class. The experimental group also scored higher in the four skills on the MLA Cooperative Foreign Language Tests. The t test for evaluating the differences between the means of the two randomly chosen groups also showed that there was a significant difference in achievement in the class working with small group interaction.

Harold Shane defined the three most important questions of education as:

(1) Who am I? (self-identity)
(2) What am I doing? (self-orientation)
(3) Where am I going? (self-direction)[13]

The "me" in small-group work may be more beneficial in the long run than all of the needs for increased conversational practice which are usually cited in the rationale for grouping. A person cannot define himself until the situations are unstructured--nor can he prove himself. In discussing the central developmental task of adolescence, Edgar Friedenberg says:

> ...The task is self-definition. Adolescence is the period during which he differentiates himself from his culture, though on the culture's terms. It is the age at which, by becoming a person in his own right, he becomes capable of deeply felt relationships to other individuals perceived clearly as such. It is precisely this sense of individuality which fails to develop, or develops only feebly, in most primitive cultures or among lower-status social groups. A successful initiation leads to group solidarity and a warm sense of belonging; a successful adolescence adds to these a profound sense of self--of one's own personality.[14]

When we cite our reasons for small-group activities, we can continue to cite purposeful communication, unselfconscious expression, and purposeful communication, but let's not forget that there are broader and more important reasons for group work than these; these effects may survive much longer than whatever proficiency the student may have--however briefly.

But, suppose, for whatever narrow or broad reasons, you would like to initiate small-group work. How do you begin? How do you begin on Monday? Begin on Monday by conducting question-answer exercises as conversations instead of "teacher" drills. And take the students into your confidence as to the reasons for this instructional "breakthrough." That means that you should be posing questions in slightly different style--and reacting to the responses differently, too. Let's try some examples.

Teacher Style:	Where is the Basque Country located?
	Good. Is the Basque Country a mountainous region?

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[13]Harold G. Shane. "A Curriculum Continuum: Possible Trends in the Seventies." Phi Delta Kappan Reprint. (March 1970)

[14]Edgar Z. Friedenberg. The Vanishing Adolescent. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, 1964): 9-10.

	Fine. Is it cold there in winter?
	Correct. Why isn't it cold in winter?, etc.
Conversational Style·	Where is the Basque Country?
	Then it's a mountainous region?
	I imagine it's very cold there in winter. Is it?
	How interesting! How do you explain that? I thought it was a mountainous region....etc.[15]

(These examples, by the way, are from Marianne Ciotti's article, "A Conceptual Framework for Small-Group Instruction in High School," which appeared in the October 1969 Foreign Language Annals.) Notice that this process of conversational style contains no evaluative statements, just transitions and expressions of interest.

Ciotti recommends the use of cultural narratives for basic conversation practice in small groups because·

1. It provides content of anthropological significance which is worth reading and discussing.

2. The factual and substantive information is stimulating to conversational exchange.

3. The opportunity for talking about things and ideas in the third person as well as the first and second person is present.

4. It connects the written language with the spoken language by providing a written stimulus for the exchange of thought at the conversational level, thereby contributing to purposeful reading, a skill of intellectual value.

5. It goes beyond conversational clichés and patterns and permits the extraction of patterns of semantic range that can be recombined for the expression of personal meaning.

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[15]Marianne C. Ciotti. "A Conceptual Frameword for Small-Group Instruction in High School." Foreign Language Annals, Volume Three, Number One (October 1969): 83.

6. It permits expression sustained at length that is more similar to normal conversational behavior than the artificially-contrived one-sentence stimulus, one-sentence response pattern characteristic of early dialogues.[16]

Now while you are teaching your class a conversational style in question-answer drills, you can be preparing a "culture capsule" like those suggested by H. Darrel Taylor and John L. Sorenson in the Handbook on Latin America for Spanish Teachers, edited by H. Ned Seeyle and available from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield, Illinois. Imagine that I am "rendering" their sample "capsule" in Spanish.

> In order to understand that in Mexico bullfights are not considered to be cruel to the bull, it is necessary to know something of the ideas of North Americans and Mexicans concerning animals. In the United States, animals are personified more often than in Mexican culture. In the United States there are Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; there are animal hospitals and cemeteries. We read of Elmer, the Borden Bull and his "wife," Elsie, and their "daughter," Daisy. Ferdinand, the timid bull, is content with flowers and is also the subject of a favorite story. Favorites of long standing are Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse. Thus, we give animals the emotions and culture that people have. Mexican people think more of the bestiality of the animals. Animal bodies differ from human bodies. They have special names for animal feet, animal backs, and animal necks, as opposed to human feet, backs, and necks. Ferdinand is not the Mexican idea of a bull, nor is the ponderous dairy bull the Mexican concept of a bull. They thing of him as a wild, strong, clever brute that depends upon strength and the instinct to live. Anglo-Saxon Americans think of a game fish or a wild beast in the same sense that a Mexican thinks of a bull.
>
> The bullfight has many parts that come in a special order, and each has a complicated ritual. The procession with its pomp and ceremony presents the participants. An orchestra plays music which prepares the scene for each part in the show. The music instills a tragic note when we hear the announcement of the last part--the matador in his brilliant traje de luces who with sword and muleta in hand presents himself for the moment of truth, when the man will try to kill the beast.

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[16] Ibid., p. 81.

> The bullfight is an extravaganza of colors, music, and action. It is the most popular sport in Mexico. Bullfighters there enjoy the popularity that movie stars do in the United States. The great show of the matador's valor pleases the Mexican people very much, but beyond this it is an emotional experience in which the spectator sees the victory of a fearless, intelligent athlete over brute strength and animal cunning.[17]

Suppose that you present this cultural capsule to the class--illustrated by whatever visuals or realia you select as an oral drill, then for reading practice. When the mass of the students appear to have the content under control, prepare a question sheet (informally phrased for use by a conversation leader, with transitional cues) and attempt your first grouping session. The day you have that session, discuss your expectations with the students--and be realistic.

The next day or two, work with the full class on "piggyback" responses. Ask a question and encourage students to contribute to the answer of the respondent without waiting for another question. Encourage students to find out (if they do not already know) some of the vocabulary for parts of the body, both animal and human, to throw into the conversational "hopper." Urge them to identify other animals personified in American culture. Work upon paraphrase and summarization of what has gone before. Work with the one capsule until the process of dealing with it has been generally mastered, but produce question guidelines to help the group leaders along. Provide heaps of encouragement, remembering to sit down as a helper when you provide your assistance, and bite your tongue if a "Correct!" or a correction of pronunciation or intonation crosses your lips.

If an oral composition (or a written one) is your chosen group goal, be sure to provide the same kind of time line required to build conversation groups. The students will need one day to brainstorm and organize, one day to compose, and one day to practice (or write). If performance, is to be part of the process, allow one more day. In reporting on what they call "the liberated dialogue," Zoe Ann Ghan and Kathryn Rickel recount the narrative some ninth graders wrote after two years of study:

> Hansel and Gretel, two very emotional superswift children, listen to their father tell their stepmother that he's broke because he's just bought a new car. She tells him that they'd better get rid of the kids, then, since feeding them is expensive. As the dialogue continues, Hansel and

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[17]H. Darrel Taylor and John L. Sorenson. "Culture Capsules." In A Handbook on Latin America for Spanish Teachers. Edited by H. Ned Seeyle. (Springfield: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Illinois, 1968): 17.

> Gretel run off to the Haight-Ashbury district and get "turned on" during a "love-in" that they stumble into. Incongruously, a "witch" welcomes them to the "love-in" and introduces them to some "hippies" busily strumming their guitars. At long last, their immature father seeks them out, tells them that his common stocks have gone up, thus he can afford to have them at home again. Hansel and Gretel push the "witch" into the fire-place, and happily drive back home with their father.[18]

My favorite group composition was a relatively short dialogue:

Hans: What did you get on the test over the tenth unit?

Fritz: An "A", but that was the most stupid dialogue I've ever seen. German kids just can't be that stuffy.

Hans: You mean that Mozart rather that rock junk?

Fritz: Yeah! But I suppose Miss Strasheim wouldn't teach us anything that wasn't "cultured."

(Fadeout) Hans: I wonder if she listens to nothing but Mozart at her birthday parties.

Fritz: For old time's sake!

As Ghan and Rickel point out:

> Students of all ages have a need for role-playing and if, though role-playing in developing dialogues in the foreign language an outlet is offered for some of the emotional stresses, so much the better. Is there any harm in permitting students of foreign language to bring out conflicts of parent-child, teacher-pupil, peer relationships? Teenage problems offer a fertile field for original dialogues. In the dramatization of original dialogues, pupils often lend an atmosphere of reality to their learning projecting their foreign language into everyday activites.[19]

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[18]Zoe Ann Ghann and Kathryn Rickel. "The Liberated Dialogue, or 'Let the Kids Make Up Their Own Dialogues'." Foreign Language Annals, Volume Three, Number Two (December 1969): 238.

[19]Ibid., p. 239.

In 1964, Sylvia Ashton-Warner gave us some good advice when she wrote:

> For long sitting, watching and pondering (all so unprofessional) I have found out the worst enemies to what we call teaching. There are two.
>
> The first is the children's interest in each other. It plays the very devil with orthodox methods. If only they'd stop talking to each other, playing with each other, fighting with each other, and loving each other. This unseemly and unlawful communication! In self-defense I've got to use the damn thing. So I harness the communication, since I can't control it, and base my method on it. They read in pairs, sentence and sentence about. There's no time for either to get bored. Each checks the other's mistakes and hurries him if he's too slow, since his own turn depends on it. They teach each other all their work in pairs, sitting cross-legged knee to knee on the mat, or on their tables, arguing with, correcting, abusing or smiling at each other. And between them all the time is this togetherness, so that learning is so mixed up with relationship that it becomes a part of it. What an unsung creative medium is relationship![20]

"What an unsung creative medium is relationship!" Even when that relationship causes the second worst enemy to what we call teaching.

> Noise, noise, noise, yes. But if you don't like noise, don't be a teacher. Because children are noisy animals... But it's a natural noise and therefore bearable. True, there is an occasional howl of rage, a shout of accusation, soprano crying and the sound of something falling, but there is also a voice raised in joy, someone singing and the break, break, break of laughter. In any case, it's all expulsion of energy and as such, a help. I let anything come...within safety; but <u>I use it</u>.[21]

The foreign-language student <u>is</u> a social creature; he is a producer-consumer, a citizen, a friend. Are YOU willing to sacrifice the "creative medium of relationship" for "noise, noise, noise," or can YOU <u>use it</u>?

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[20]Sylvia Ashton-Warner. <u>Teacher</u>. (New York: Bantam Books by arrangement with Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1964): 91-92.

[21]Ibid., p. 92.